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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

NIC No. 05146-85
16 October 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: National Intelligence Officer for Europe 

FROM: [REDACTED]
Assistant National Intelligence for Europe

SUBJECT: Yugoslavia: Tito's Spies Falling Out

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1. Introduction: Yugoslavia is undergoing one of the most revealing public examinations of the founding days of its regime ever to take place in the Communist world. A breakdown in self-censorship norms and a growing understanding of the obsolescence of the old conspiratorial ways started the process even prior to Tito's death five and a half year ago. But his passing accelerated the trend toward candor and freer expression which inevitably has led to revisionist attacks on the most sacred myths of the partisan era.

2. More recently, however, the pace has quickened as his old comrades rush to preserve their place in history by publishing memoirs which tell all and attack their rivals. Most significantly, secret archives are increasingly being opened to public view--albeit in unauthorized leaks and usually in the pursuit of personal and ethnic vendettas. The upshot is a hyper-polemicized atmosphere in which the distant past is used as a launch pad for forces essentially arguing the nature of the federation--as it is now and should be.

3. Discussion: Over the past few years, there has been a steady increase in memoirs from ex-members of Tito's entourage--including an increasing number by his onetime spymasters and secret police henchmen. (None have been published in English as yet.) Most tend to provide new and more solid data for reevaluating the past and thereby establishing a more mature attitude on contemporary and future policy issues. But an increasing number of the revelations also stir up old passions and revive contentious issues by selective leaks from classified archives.

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4. The memoirs of his intelligence and internal security officers are noteworthy as most of these first-time authors in seeking to establish their personal roles in history also settle old scores with an unmatched vengeance. Their resulting publications have caused a few mini sensations in exposing secret struggles behind post-war developments, and revealing the roots of continuing ethnic and political strains among the men who Tito left in power.

5. This wave of historical revisionism has no precedent in Yugoslavia and its long term impact still is difficult to assess.

- For the short-term, there is an apparent numbing effect of too many myths crumbling at the same time. With the public airing of dirty laundry routine, the public pays little evident attention to each new revelation and low blow--despite extensive media hype.
- Most Yugoslavs are inclined to take a perverse pleasure in seeing the once mighty--and feared--locked in undignified mud-slinging but few dare to use the exposes to demand the real facts or reforms.
- But the youth, already cynical about partisans' self-proclaimed "brotherhood and unity" may be more inclined to feel justified in pursuing new answers of their own.

6. The intensity and implications of the revelations has caused some concern recently. On 8 September NIN, the national weekly published in Belgrade, gave a brief overview of the spies' squabbles and questioned the propriety of their self-serving and divisive essays. The article also criticized aspects of the system which allow its secret agents to willfully abuse their trust and circumvent the will of the people and the party.

7. The tangle of accusations and counter-accusations is too complex to relate fully in a brief overview. A fuller discussion of the hottest dispute of the moment will serve to convey a "feel" for the scope and bitterness at work in the exposes.

8. The Hebrang Affair: The case receiving the most attention now is a purported effort to rehabilitate Andrija Hebrang, Tito's post-war economic czar, who was arrested for siding with Stalin after the 1948 break with Moscow. (He died in jail without trial under still mysterious circumstances.)

9. The various exposes, have suggested that forces in Zagreb--some infer that Croat party leader Vrhovec is the prime mover--want to restore Hebrang's good name in order to prove a record of ideological purity for the Croat Communist party which it does not deserve.

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Those attacking the Hebrang rehabilitation drive argue it is a veiled attack on Tito's reputation and a plot to force Belgrade to reevaluate the split with Stalin. The exchanges in this dispute are vicious.

10. Josip Kopinic, a pre-war Tito confidant who controlled the NKVD's wartime communications center for the Balkans in Zagreb, first aired the issue in a biography in 1982. (Kopinic's biography was written by an ex-SDB officer Vlado Cencic.) Kopinic argued that Hebrang had become a Gestapo agent in 1942 and that Kopinic dutifully relayed that fact to Moscow. Kopinic says that the Soviets hid that knowledge from Tito, used it to make Hebrang their agent and that NKVD agents in Yugoslavia after the war exterminated everyone who had firsthand knowledge of Hebrang's earlier treason.

11. Kopinic himself has become the target of repostes and smear attacks mostly in journals based in Croatia.

- In a recent interview, Ivan "Stevo" Krajacic, Tito's most intimate confidant in the Croat party, bristled at Kopinic's claim that Krajacic served as a Soviet military intelligence agent in Yugoslavia. Krajacic returns the favor by accusing Kopinic of serving "who knows what foreign interests" and making some sweeping accusations about Serbian nationalist machinations during the Rankovic era.
- Another secret police officer, a Croat, recently suggested that Kopinic was a dupe of the Gestapo throughout most of the war.
- Yet a third former internal security official in Zagreb has argued in print that Hebrang was absolved of the Nazi spy allegations after the war by a secret police investigation in Croatia. He accused Kopinic of "shooting the dead"--i.e. defaming a leader who can no longer defend himself.

In turn, Kopinic has threatened to dip into his records from the war--including operational cables to and from "Uncle" (Stalin's codename)--to "unmask" the forces defending Hebrang.

12. The Dedijer Link. Vladimir Dedijer, Tito's official biographer, has taken Kopinic's side. Drawing on secret archives and information made available to him by top party and police officials who oppose the Croats' rehabilitation effort, Dedijer describes the Croat Communist

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leaders as cowards and opportunists who Tito had to intimidate into fighting the Germans. Dedijer reveals secret documents which assert that top Croat Communists wavered when Stalin tried to set up an independent Croat Communist Party--under Soviet not Tito's control--during the early days of the war. Dedijer also argues that Hebrang's protectors murdered People's Hero Ivan Milutinovic at the end of the war. He also has attacked Stevo Krajacic complaining that in 1984 Krajacic--Dedijer calls him "some Soviet agent"--tried to censor the third volume of Dedijer's biography of Tito.

13. In interviews for scandal-mongering journals in Yugoslavia, Dedijer also has asserted that he has become the target of death threats and claimed several arson attempts against his personal archives. For a time last year, he moved to Italy and gave interviews to the Italian press claiming that his life was in danger from a still powerful ring of unnamed ultraconservatives. We have no good sense of the accuracy of these assertions but he has since returned to Yugoslavia presumably on the basis of guarantees of his safety. He has not retracted the earlier allegations but then he never does.

- Dedijer is an enfant terrible in Yugoslavia. He is respected but not fully believed because of his long affinity for ultra-revolutionary causes and his eclectic ideology which often generates frictions with the fanatics he befriends.
- Two of his sons died under mysterious circumstances in the 1950s but, despite friends with good access, he has never been able to supply convincing proof to explain the plots that he says led to their untimely deaths.

Dedijer, however, remains undaunted and the the third volume of his biography of Tito, published last year, adds more controversy as it covers in detail the period from 1945 to 1955. He is currently working on the fourth volume which will probably extend into the mid 1960s an era which saw the rise of many current leaders.

14. Where does it all lead? These disputes of themselves need not lead to any major political developments. There is no official plan or apparent desire to formally reopen the Hebrang case or investigate proliferating changes and countercharges. Moreover, public outrage is unlikely as in-bred caution is still likely to make most Yugoslavs keep a safe distance during a falling out of the powerful.

15. The exposes nevertheless seem to have an unrestricted horizon as each author with a special axe to grind also has support from factions within the badly fractured political system. Efforts to reinstitute a measure of editorial self-restraint--including attempts by the central committee to restore some base-line taboos--have come to naught. Only a

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new consensus among those leaders who sleep badly now at the thought of the next day's revelations could reinstall the self-censorship which previously kept these issues from surfacing. But with self-preservation giving way to a penchant for spiteful quarrels, we expect more of the same and at a steadily intensifying pace.

16. If unchecked, the trend is likely to lead to;

- express calls for de-Titoization, perhaps beginning with more demands to rehabilitate those he purged on all sides of the political spectrum.
- sharpening diatribes which aggravate differences between advocates of reform and recidivist Stalinists within the leadership.

If this comes to pass, Yugoslavia's gradual evolution of more durable democratic institutions could accelerate more dramatically. And there would be attendant risks of a counterreaction and a last hurrah of the old guard who probably would seek a regression toward the oppressive rule of the early Tito years.

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